United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses concern over reports of attempted coup against Government of President Carlos Andrés Pérez of Venezuela.

- Director General of International Atomic Energy Agency, in address before Arab Conference in Tripoli, calls for reinforcement of non-proliferation safeguards system; receives assurance from Libyan leaders for openness to inspection of sites.

- United Nations special mission returns from Iraq with "detailed new information" about weapons of mass destruction.

- Secretary-General invites parties in Somali conflict and leaders of regional organizations to meeting in New York next week; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees says some 700 Somali refugees a day are pouring into Kenya.

- Secretary-General appoints Rafeeudin Ahmed as Executive Secretary of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific with effect from 1 April.

- General Assembly to take up financing of United Nations mission to Cambodia and disaster aid to Samoa.

- Special Committee on Charter begins 1992 session with focus on maintenance of international peace and security.

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Responding to reports about events in Venezuela yesterday, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today through his Spokesman that he had received with great concern reports of an attempted coup against the Government of President Carlos Andrés Pérez of Venezuela.

The Secretary-General said he was relieved to learn that the coup appeared to have failed and that the freely elected leader in that country, "a solid bastion of democracy", was in control. He expressed the hope that full

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normality would be re-established soon and wished to convey his best wishes to President Carlos Andrés Pérez whom he had met last week.

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The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Hans Blix, has called for the strengthening of the non-proliferation safeguards system, so as to reinforce confidence and consolidate conditions for peace. Addressing senior nuclear scientists and officials from Arab nations in Tripoli on Sunday, 2 February, he urged all non-nuclear-weapon States which have adhered to the non-proliferation Treaty or similar treaties, and which have comprehensive safeguards agreements with the IAEA, to support the reinforcement of the safeguards regime. He said the inspection system needed to be strong enough to detect any possible diversion of material from civilian to military use.

Mr. Blix went on to say that if allegations were made about a country engaging in clandestine nuclear activities or having secret installations, that country would be well advised to ask of its own accord for the IAEA to visit the location and report on it. The safeguards agreements should also serve to clear up unfounded allegations or suspicions.

While in Libya, Mr. Blix held discussions with the political leaders of the country on the use of nuclear energy and technology. He was assured that Libya was not preparing for any military application of nuclear energy. Appreciation was expressed to him for the assistance provided by the IAEA and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in using a radiation method to eradicate the new world screwworm fly, a dangerous pest that could have become a threat to cattle and wildlife in Africa and the Mediterranean region.

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Members of a special United Nations mission to Iraq returned yesterday to New York with "detailed new information" about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

During its visit to Iraq, the mission emphasized to the authorities the need to provide information requested under Security Council resolution 715 (1991) concerning future monitoring and verification, as well as resolution 707 (1991), which ensures access and safety of United Nations inspection teams.

Describing the talks as "significant, detailed and useful", the five-member team, which had been dispatched by Rolf Ekeus, Executive Chairman of the Special Commission, said that many problems and misunderstandings could have been cleared up some time ago and the work of the Special Commission speeded up if the information had been made available earlier.

The detailed information provided by the Iraqis is now being assessed by the Office of the Special Commission set up by the Security Council in connection with the disposal of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

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In separate news, the Secretary-General's Spokesman told correspondents today that talks between the United Nations and Iraq on the subject of oil sales, scheduled to take place in Vienna this week, had been cancelled by Iraq, according to a message delivered by the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Abdul Amir A. Al-Anbari. The message did not mention whether the talks would resume at a later date.

The Spokesman further informed correspondents that the Secretary-General was scheduled to leave for Colombia on Friday, 7 February, to attend the opening of the Eighth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). He will return to New York on Sunday.

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The Secretary-General's Spokesman told correspondents today that Mr. Boutros-Ghali has invited the Secretary-Generals of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the League of Arab States and the Islamic Conference to send representatives to New York for a meeting next week on the situation in Somalia. Interim President Ali Mahdi Mohammed and General Mohammed Farah Aideed, Chairman of the United Somali Congress, have also asked to be represented at the meeting.

In related news, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says that Somali refugees are streaming into Kenya at a rate of about 700 per day.

According to the UNHCR's representative in Kenya, Sylvester Awuye, some 75,000 Somalis, mainly old men, women and children, have already poured across the border. Most are totally emaciated and are suffering from severe dehydration and malnutrition. The World Food programme has set aside a special allocation for an estimated 145,000 people, to cope with the exodus from war-torn Somalia. An emergency task force has been set up in Nairobi and the Kenyan Government has provided a site for a new camp to accommodate the flood of arrivals.

The report was received from a United Nations Press Officer based in Geneva.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed Rafeeudin Ahmed as Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Mr. Ahmed, who will be replacing Shah A.M.S. Kibria, will assume his functions with effect from 1 April.

A national of Pakistan, Mr. Ahmed has held the post of Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social affairs, while continuing to serve as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in South-East Asia. Prior to that, from 1 January 1983, he was Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Trusteeship and

Decolonization. Mr. Ahmed joined the Secretariat in May 1970.

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Financial questions concerning United Nations transitional arrangements in Cambodia were among the new items which the General Assembly this morning decided to add to the agenda of its current session.

The funding of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and proposals concerning the financing of the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) were allocated to the Assembly's Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), along with the task of recommending candidates to fill two vacancies on the International Civil Service Commission.

In response to a request by Samoa for assistance following the devastation caused by the cyclone in December 1991, the Assembly decided to reopen the question of special economic and disaster relief assistance and to discuss that subject directly in plenary meeting.

Also this morning, the Assembly took note of a report by the Secretary-General drawing attention to the fact that 20 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their assessed financial contributions to the United Nations. Mr. Boutros-Ghali had reminded delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter, a United Nations Member which was in arrears in paying its contributions for two full years would have no vote in the Assembly.

When the Assembly meets again on 14 February, it will consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on the three matters allocated to it.

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The Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization began its three-week session at Headquarters yesterday.

As requested by the General Assembly, the Special Committee will give priority to the question of maintaining international peace and security in all its aspects, and to enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. It is also to consider assistance to third States affected by the application of Security Council economic sanctions, and conciliation rules for the settlement of disputes between States.

The newly elected Chairman, Miroslav Potocny of Czechoslovakia, said that States were becoming more and more interdependent and were integrating economically and politically. Those changes raised hopes for peace around the world, but the search for democratic change presented new challenges. Small-scale conflicts could still occur and ecological conflicts, he pointed out, were starting to rise.

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